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# The Necessity Of Sun Safety Improvement

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone needs sun exposure as when the skin is exposed to the sun, our bodies make vitamin D (Kate M. Cronan, 2019). This helps the body to absorb calcium for stronger, healthier bones (Kate M. Cronan, 2019). "Too much unprotected exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause skin damage, eye damage, immune system suppression, and skin cancer. Even people in their twenties can develop skin cancer." (Kate M. Cronan, 2019). "More than 11,500 Australian men and women are diagnosed with a melanoma each year, and an estimated 434,000 people are treated for one or more non-melanoma skin cancers." (SunSmart, 2019). "Most Australians are familiar with the 'slip, slop, slap' message, but new research suggests we're not taking sun safety seriously enough." (Australian National University, 2018).

The purpose of this report is to investigate the importance of sun safety in schools. Data has been collated from a cohort of teachers and students at Dalby State High School (DSHS). The survey consisted of 22 questions and they answered these questions in their Pastoral Care groups. It was important to do this to understand the perspective of both the teachers and students and how they feel about the current school "Sun Safety Policy". During the survey the teachers were asked whether they have ever read the DSHS sun safety policy with 17 out of 69 indicating they didn't know a policy existed. It is important for the teachers to know and understand the schools sun safety policy so they can implement and enforce the rules for the students.

When looking back on the data there were many teachers and students who had a limited understanding on sun safety. It was interesting to see how many of the teachers actually knew about sun safety and the schools policy around these things. Of the cohort surveyed 25% of teachers that did the survey said that they didn't know there was a school sun safety policy and another 42% haven't read the DSHS policy on sun safety. If teachers are unaware of these policies they cannot implement these actions into their teaching or how they conduct themselves. This results in students having a limited understanding of sun safety and increases the risk of melanoma and other skin cancers. "It is estimated that in 2009, 15,229 new cases of melanoma (8,899 males and 6,330 females) will be diagnosed, making it the fourth most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia (Australian Government, 2019)." The students are under-educated meaning they don't understand the risks of developing skin cancer. It's stated in the DSHS Sun Safety Policy that students are to wear the appropriate school hat and sun screen provided by the P & C when they are doing outdoor activities. 37% of students surveyed say they either dislike the policy or dislike the design of the hats and 44% said they just don't like the texture of the sunscreen provided.

"The Social Ecological Model (SEM) is a theory-based framework for understanding the multifaceted and interactive effects of personal and environmental factors that determine behaviors, and for identifying behavioral and organizational leverage points and intermediaries for health promotion within organization (Unicef, 2019)." It's shown with many different examples but sun safety is one of the main ones. Students think "It's not cool" to wear a school hat or wear sunscreen. Students are influenced by the people around them and refuse to make

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their own decisions or listen to the teachers about how serious skin cancer can be. It is evident by the survey, that DSHS's Sun Safety policy is definitely a barrier for the kids not being sun safe. The students like to wear non-school hats as they can choose the style and colour. The students were asked if they would be more inclined to wear a hat at school if they were able to wear their own non-school hat with 130 out of 216 students responding yes. Sunscreen is another big issue around DSHS, the sunscreen is provided to the students but they dislike the texture of it. If one student puts it on, other students are more inclined to doing the same. If one student could show the others that the sunscreen is important for their health they may be more persuaded to the right way. The only reason stopping students from being healthy and sun safe is everyone around them. Students are being ignorant to the real reason that sun safety is being enforced. They do not understand severity of skin cancer and the facts around it; this is when the teachers need to have a basic understanding on this topic to implement what they can. Mr Slevin said "When you look at the trend in terms of skin cancer rates and the gap between men and women there's no doubt we need to focus on men." (Ketchell, 2019). In the data it shows that one in 14 men are diagnosed with melanoma before the age of 85 in comparison to one in 23 females (Ketchell, 2019).

DSHS Sun Safety Policy is a barrier to the students that do not like the school hat. During the survey there were a lot of students saying that they either don't like the schools policy or they dislike the look of the school hats. The students were also asked; if they could wear their own hat would they wear them? The results were very positive. The principal of DSHS is trying to crack down on the amount of non-school hats being worn around the school. As a result the number of kids that are being sun safe is reduced. If students were allowed to wear non-school hats it is likely there would be an increase in the number of students being sun safe.

DSHS teachers are definitely a barrier to the students not wearing hats and not being educated enough. The teachers were asked on a scale of 1-10 how important sun safety is to them and 31 indicated a score of 10. This is not evident in all the other questions as only 18 out of 65 knew what either UVA or UVB meant. More than half the teachers surveyed didn't even realise that DSHS had a sun safety policy. Teachers received an email for DSHS principal (Dr Russell), "I am completely 'over' the number of students wearing non-uniform hats at the moment," he stated in the email.

The Salutogenic Model describes an approach that focuses on the factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause dis-ease (Definitions, 2019). An approach where health is viewed as a continuum between "Dis-ease" and "ease", where an individual's health status is fluid depending on the issue, context and available resources (Rapson, 2019). The position of an individual can be effected based on the understanding of sun safety the teachers have. If the teachers are educated it will potentially reduce the risk of sun cancer and maintain their physical health.

"What we are seeing are small gains as a result of ongoing public communication campaigns. If these campaigns do not continue, we will almost certainly see these gains reverse."- said Professor Jones. Professor Jones said such activities could include applying the "no hat no play" rule to secondary schools, ensuring school uniforms provide adequate sun protection, and monitoring changes in skin cancer incidence following the ban on tanning beds which comes into place in NSW next year (Ketchell, 2019).

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## CONCLUSION

From the survey results it's clear that something needs to be done about improving sun safety for students at DSHS, to make them more aware of the seriousness of sun cancer and in particular melanoma. Its believe that the younger grades (7-9) need to have 2 or 3 PC lessons educating them or simple thing they can do to reduce the risk of sun damage and skin cancer.

## References

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